

This morning I suggested, vv1-7 contains three major themes [1] Governing authorities are established by God, [2] Governing authorities are ministers of God, and [3] Governing authorities are obeyed for God's sake—this morning I sought to explain the first under two assertions—[a] all authority is from God, and [b] all authorities are appointed by God...

This brings us this evening to our second major theme—Governing authorities are ministers of God—and in some ways this is the most difficult to explain, for here we come to the oft debated subject of the role and purpose of the magistrate with regards to enforcing morality—simply put what is the God-intended purpose of the state—well this passage, perhaps more clearly than any other—provides a threefold answer to that question...

But—before I come to these—I want to begin with an introductory point—concerning the relationship of the church and state, more from historic perspective—this will lead us nicely into our second main heading—on the primary responsibilities of the state, as the minister of God...

- I. The Relationship of Church and State
- II. The Primary Responsibilities of State

I. The Relationship of Church and State

1. Here—in order to keep this as simple as possible—I want to briefly examine three of the most common views...
2. [1] The state runs the church—this has been a common view since the 4th century and the Roman Emperor Constantine...
3. Constantine, after converting to Christianity, largely assumed the role of head or leader of all religious affairs...
4. Simply put—he assumed authority over the church—the state dictated and regulated the affairs of the church...
5. This view continues even today in many parts of the world—where the King or Queen is head over the church...
6. In fact, unless I am mistaken, this is still the view in Great Britain—where the Queen rules the church of England...
7. Yet, some would argue, this view predates Constantine and the Queen of England—but finds its roots in the OT...
8. That is—in the Theocracy of Israel—wherein God ruled the nation through a king—which included their religious practices...
9. Under the Theocracy, which simply means God-rule, the church and state comprised one identity—ruled by a king...
10. Now—I have to admit—that this view was largely that held to by the Protestant Reformers and English Presbyterians...
11. This was Calvin's view which found expression in Geneva—where governing authorities had authority in the church...
12. Furthermore—this was the view of the original Westminster Confession (1647)—before its American revisions...
13. WCF 23:3—"The civil magistrate may not assume to himself the administration of the Word and sacraments, or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven: yet he has authority, and it is his duty, to take order, that unity and peace be preserved in the church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire, that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed, all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed, and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered, and observed..."
14. Now again—the Westminster Confession that you own, is likely the altered version—and sounds very different...
15. In fact—the altered version reflects the thinking of the Baptists—which I would agree—is the Biblical view...

16. But this was the original wording in 1647, and it reflects this view began with Constantine—the state runs the church...
17. [2] The church runs the state—under this system, the king (or governing authorities)—reports to the church...
18. This view, of course, finds its greatest expression in Roman Catholicism—where the Pope rules the Monarchy...
19. But the problem with this view is that—it fundamentally misinterprets and applies, our Savior words to Peter...
20. Matt.16:19—"and I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven..."
21. The kingdom of heaven is NOT a reference to the kingdoms of this world—but to the kingdom of Christ's church...
22. V18—"And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it..."
23. It is upon Peter as an apostle that Christ would build His church—which would prevail against the gates of hell...
24. [3] The church and state are separate yet related—this I suggest, is the historical Baptist view—and that found within Scripture...
25. Simply put—both the church and state are God-ordained institutions—each with its own God-given limitations...
26. The fundamental job or purpose of the state is to create a safe and peaceful environment—and nothing more...
27. The fundamental job or purpose of the church—is to regulate and promote true religion throughout the world...
28. Thus, this view understands that the church, is a smaller nation within the nations—that remains separate and distinct...
29. Our Savior said—"My kingdom is not of this world"—that is was "within us"—and distinct from this world...
30. Matt.21:43—"Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it..."
31. 1Peter.2:9—"But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light..."
32. In the strict and proper sense—there is only ONE Christian nation, and it's NOT America—it is the Church...
33. The Scripture everywhere portrays the church as a small remnant who are despised and persecuted by the world...
34. That is to say—the Scriptures presuppose a separation of church and state—the church and state are not one...
35. Now—often times in our present day—this phrase "the separation of church and state"—means something different...
36. It has been hijacked by the atheist to mean—that religion and religious morality have no place in government...
37. But historically—the phrase "the separation of church and state" simply meant—they are not the same things...
38. Now—some of you may know—that throughout the history of the church—this view has been held by Christians...
39. For example—the Donatists, Waldensians, Hussites, and Anabaptists—all believed in the separation of church and state...
40. The Waldensian Confession of 1530—"We ought to honor the secular power in subjection, in obedience and promptness, and in paying taxes..."
41. The Waldensian Confession of 1532—"Of Magistrates: We believe that a Christian may exercise the office of magistrate over other Christians..."
42. Hussites (The Bohemian Confession of 1535)—"The role and duties of magistrates are these: to proclaim the law equally to all; to maintain and secure peace and public tranquillity for the benefit of all without

favoritism for any persons; to exact punishments on wicked persons and evil-doers who disturb that peace and tranquillity; and to protect all others from their power and unjust injury...BUT regarding those things which concern souls and faith and salvation, we teach that only God and His ministers are to be heard, as Christ Himself says: Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's [Matt.22:21]..."

43. LBC 24:1—"God, the supreme Lord and King of all the world, has ordained civil magistrates to be under Him, over the people, for His own glory and the public good; and to this end has armed them with the power of the sword, for defence and encouragement of them that do good, and for the punishment of evil doers..."
44. Yet—I have asserted that the church is not only separate from the state—but it's intimately RELATED to it...
45. How should the church relate to the state?—[a] she should pray for the state, and [b] she should participate in the state...
46. We must seek to elect officials that reflect Christian values and morals—we must pray for those presently in office...
47. 1Tim.2:1-2—"therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence..."
48. LBC 24:2—"It is lawful for Christians to accept and execute the office of a magistrate when called thereunto; in the management whereof, as they ought especially to maintain justice and peace, according to the wholesome laws of each kingdom and common wealth, so for that end they may lawfully now, under the New Testament, wage war upon just and necessary occasions..."
49. LBC 24:3—"Civil magistrates being set up by God for the ends aforesaid; subjection, in all lawful things commanded by them, ought to be yielded by us in the Lord, not only for wrath, but for conscience' sake; and we ought to make supplications and prayers for kings and all that are in authority, that under them we may live a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty..."
50. MLJ—"The church and state in NT teaching are entirely distinct and there is no warrant whatsoever from the NT teaching for either to control the other. There is no warrant for the church to control the state, as the Roman Catholic Church has done and would always like to do. But equally there is no warrant for the state to control the church as happens under every state church..."

II. The Primary Responsibilities of State

A. To restrain evil

1. This is the first responsibility for the state—they are to restrain or curb the native depravity of fallen man...
2. Now—the fundamental way this happens is—the state restrains evil by threatening punishment to evil doers...
3. This is found in several phrases, v3a—"for rulers are not a terror [a cause of fear] to good works, but to evil..."
4. Rulers, or governing authorities, are—"a terror"—they are—"a cause of fear"—they are a deterrent to evil...
5. How do they do that?—they produce within you a measure of fear—fear of paying a ticket, or going to prison...
6. This is the first way in which governing authorities are God's servants—they restrain evil by creating fear...
7. Now—here I must remind you of a distinction I recently made concerning the kingdom of power and grace...
8. [a] The kingdom of power—this concerns Christ's rightful rule over all men—regardless if they're Christian...
9. [b] The kingdom of grace—this concerns Christ's rule and reign—within the hearts of His regenerate people...
10. Now—Christ rules or reigns over the unconverted—by the law which remains within their hearts by nature...

11. Thus—there's two things happening at the same time—there is the external law that threatens punishment...
12. But—there's also the inward shadow of the law, which remains within every man, that brings guilt to the conscience...
13. In other words—there are two courtrooms—and native man, generally speaking, fears being found in either...
14. There is—the actual physical courtroom, in which he will be tried and condemned, and the courtroom of conscience...
15. Rom.2:14-15—"for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, 15 who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves *their* thoughts accusing or else excusing *them*)..."
16. Notice—the Gentiles, that is pagans—"by nature do the things in the law"—that is—within the moral law...
17. Now—by moral law I mean—the law as summarized in the Ten Commandments—and reduced to two—love God and your neighbor...
18. This is the law that remains, in shadow form, within the hearts of all men by nature—and it's this law, that civil law should be based upon...
19. In other words—the governing authorities—should build civil law on the basic morality of God's holy word...
20. Thus—the Lord uses the law that remains within man's heart, and the external laws of the land—to restrain evil...

B. To punish evil

1. V2—"Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves..."
2. V4—"But if you do evil, be afraid: for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil..."
3. This of course relates closely relates to the former point—in that the threat of punishment restrains evil men...
4. For example—why do we obey the traffic laws—but because we are afraid of getting or receiving a traffic ticketed...
5. Brethren—can you imagine what a society would become—if it lacked all forms of organized government...
6. Thus—any governing authority—that fails to consistently punish evil—is not performing its God-given duty...
7. Now—the reference to "the sword" is an allusion to the death penalty—the ultimate and final form of punishment...
8. In the first century, beheading was a common form of capital punishment—as it was quick and considered humane...
9. Paul here says—the governing authorities—"do not bear the sword in vain"—that is—without purpose or meaning...
10. In other words—the magistrate bears the sword for a purpose—"an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil..."
11. Gen.9:5-6—"Surely for your lifeblood I will demand *a reckoning*; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of man. 6 Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man..."
12. This passage is a classic defence for capital punishment—in cases when someone murdered another person...
13. It is given to the new world, after the flood, as a deterrent to ensure it want return to its pre-flood depravity...
14. [a] What should happen—"whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed"—he shall be put to death...

15. Thus—this text does not support the death penalty for every crime—but it does support the death penalty for murder...
16. [b] Why it should happen—"for in the image of God He made man"—thus—because the victim is made in God's image...
17. In other words—life is a SACRED thing—a gift given to man from God—and should be guarded as SACRED...
18. Now—because we live in a day when capital punishment is denied—I want to address a few key objections...
19. [1] It violates the 6th commandment—"you shall not kill"—a better translation would be—"you shall not murder..."
20. The Scriptures nowhere forbid killing—it's actually everywhere commanded—all over the Old and New Testaments...
21. For example—throughout the OT—the Lord commands the nation of Israel to conquer and kill various nations...
22. Furthermore—within the OT civil laws—the death penalty was carried frequently and for various transgressions...
23. Thus—if it was immoral to kill—these would all be sin—and God would command something against His law...
24. [2] It's unloving or unkind—well, who's standard is this based upon—our view of what's loving doesn't matter...
25. I would argue it is both loving and kind—to kill a murderer—so that he doesn't live to commit the crime again...
26. Barnes—"The tendency of society now...is to forget that God has doomed the murderer to death; and though humanity should be consulted in the execution of the laws, yet there is no humanity in allowing the murderer to live to infest society, and endanger many lives, in the place of his own, which was forfeited to justice. Far better that one murderer should die, than that he should be allowed to live, to drench his hands perhaps in the blood of many who are innocent..."
27. [3] It removes all possibility of rehabilitation—that is—what about the possibility of rehabilitating the murderer...
28. I mean—isn't it the job of the government to rehabilitate criminals—NO—it's their job to punish criminals...

C. To praise good

1. V3—"Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good.."
2. In other words—the governing authority is not commissioned to punish evil doers—but reward doers of good...
3. Now—it's not that the state should actually reward, byway of gifts, but indirectly byway of protecting and defending...
4. Barnes—" [He is God's minister for good]—that is, to protect you in your rights; to vindicate your name, person, or property; and to guard your liberty, and secure to you the results of your industry. The magistrate is not appointed directly to *reward* people, but they *practically* furnish a reward by protecting and defending them, and securing to them the interests of justice..."

III. Lessons

1. [1] The universality of God's moral law—think of it—God establishes all governments with a common morality...
2. [2] The absolute depravity of fallen man—society without any external restraint—would be absolute anarchy...
3. [3] The life-changing power of the gospel—Christians obey the law for greater motives than fear of punishment...